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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CABINET

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Ms. Aloma Dew, Chair  
Environmental Quality Commission  
14 Reilly Road  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-1132

Dear Ms. Dew:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Environmental Quality Commission's request that Kentucky take a leading role in establishing better standards for mine surveying and mapping. As you may not be aware, the Natural Resources and Environmental Cabinet (NREPC), and our Department for Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (DSMRE), have been conducting extensive site and geotechnical investigations on all existing high priority impoundments to determine the breakthrough potential of these features. The DSMRE has also implemented a very thorough, strenuous and time-consuming permit review process for any mining application that proposes to construct a impoundment, and has been actively promoting the use of alternative slurry disposal techniques.

Through our "Empower Kentucky" program, the DSMRE is now on the cutting edge of electronic permitting nationally. As part of this "Empower" process, all of the USGS maps in the Kentucky coalfields have been digitized, and all surface and underground permitting activity (including abandoned underground works) is now also being digitized and geo-referenced on these maps. The NREPC has also entered into an agreement with the Revenue Cabinet in an effort to hasten the digitizing of any mining activity. Access to much of this information is now available to the public through the DSMRE Web site (<http://www.surfacemining.ky.gov>). Also, through our affiliation with the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, a pilot program is being initiated in the Appalachian coal fields to evaluate the emerging mine void detection technology. We believe that testing program will start in the coming year.

The NREPC has been working quite closely with both MSHA and OSM on many of these technical studies and site investigations. Though there has always been a working relationship with both of these federal agencies, the events of the recent past have resulted in an improved coordination and consultation process. We will consider all your suggestions, and will move expeditiously in seeking out way to improve upon the procedures already in place. Please let us know if you have any additional question or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Henry C. List  
Deputy Secretary



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